

East Fork Lewis River Watershed

Description of the watershed

The East Fork Lewis River watershed is about 212 square miles in area, and is comprised primarily of rural and forested land. More than three quarters of the watershed is within Clark County, but the uppermost parts are in the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Skamania County. The East Fork Lewis River flows west 43 miles from its forested headwaters near Cougar Rock and Lookout Mountain to the North Fork Lewis River near La Center. The lowest reaches of the East Fork Lewis River are near sea level and influenced by ocean tides. The upper two-thirds of the watershed is a combination of commercial forest and national forest land. The balance of the watershed is comprised of rural, suburban, and urban land uses, with urban uses increasing as the river nears I-5. La Center, Yacolt, and a small portion of Battle Ground are within the watershed.

Many tributaries feed the East Fork, including Upper Rock Creek from the Dole Valley area, Yacolt Creek, Lower Rock Creek from the Fargher Lake area, Mason Creek, and Lockwood Creek. There are also many smaller named creeks such as Big Tree Creek, Dean Creek, Brezee Creek, McCormick Creek, and Jenny Creek. Farhger Lake, north of Battle Ground, is actually a peat bog, drained and managed for agriculture.

Unlike most rivers of its size in the Pacific Northwest, the main stem of the East Fork is completely free flowing with no manmade obstructions or dams. This makes it important for salmon restoration, and it does support populations of chinook, chum, winter and summer steelhead, coho, and coastal cutthroat trout. Tributary streams may have road culverts that block fish passage. Only steelhead routinely pass above Lucia Falls.

The East Fork is an important local and regional resource for boating, fishing, and swimming. Extensive trails, parks, and open spaces provide additional recreational opportunities.

Land uses in the East Fork Lewis River Watershed



Using a summer 2000 satellite image, the University of Washington determined that the East Fork Lewis watershed (Clark County portion only) is predominately forested land, fields, and shrub land.

How healthy are the East Fork Lewis River watershed streams?

Clark County and the Washington Department of Ecology have stream health data for approximately 18 percent of the East Fork Lewis River watershed's stream miles. The results are generally what would be expected by looking at the watershed's land uses.

The East Fork Lewis River has a good overall rating, even though there are areas where the stream is too warm and levels of harmful bacteria are elevated.

Lower East Fork tributaries rated less well, with poor stream health being most common. In these lower tributaries, more fecal bacteria and less diverse stream life were found.

The following bar charts show overall watershed health ratings from four perspectives. About 18 percent of the streams are currently assessed using field testing. The entire main stem is rated good in Clark County.

Overall health



Stream life health based on health of streambed creatures



Health for recreational use based on presence of harmful bacteria



General water quality based on temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen

